

## Water issues muddy S. Mtn. Freeway debate

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The proposed South Mountain Freeway could affect how a golf course and lakes are supplied with water, and how many homes eventually could be displaced.

The South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team discussed Tuesday night how the proposed freeway will affect washes, wells and rivers at its meeting at South Mountain Community College in Phoenix. The freeway would run along the Pecos Road alignment in Ahwatukee Foothills and cut through South Mountain Park.

Up to 26 wells - as many as 20 of which are in Ahwatukee Foothills - might have to be moved and some bridges built to avoid encroaching on 50 washes on the south side of South Mountain if freeway is built, freeway study team members said.

"We're determining the impact and the feasibility of mitigating it," said Floyd Roehrich, deputy state engineer for Valley transportation with the Arizona Department of Transportation, part of the freeway study team.

Scott Mars, water resources engineer with HDR Engineering, also on the study team said there are "a lot of ways to mitigate the impacts," on water-related issues. Constructing silt barriers, setting up sediment basins, and limiting vegetation removal and soil disturbance are some methods that could be used to prevent water-related pollution, study team members said.

The freeway path could require moving wells, including one that the Foothills HOA owns on Pecos Road that currently feeds water to lakes and a golf course in the HOA, said Chad Blostone, citizens team member and Foothills HOA board member.

It could be expensive to switch to a different water source and the HOA has limits on how much it can raise its members' dues each year, Blostone said.

He asked the study team how ADOT would compensate the HOA if the well couldn't be replaced.

Exactly how the well owner would be compensated is unknown because the agency has not done something like that before, according to a study team member.

The exact design of what will be built where and what needs to be moved to construct the freeway to minimize problems with water flow and meet federal and state laws has not yet been determined. Now the study team is focusing on whether water-related affects could be mitigated, said Tim Tait, ADOT community relations director and study team member.

After ADOT releases a proposed environmental impact statement then a design plan will be created.

"I'm waiting for the data to come out," said David Fultz, an Ahwatukee Foothills resident and member of Concerned Families Along South Mountain Loop 202. "The public needs to have more input."

Study team member Derrick Denis of the Foothills Reserve HOA wanted to know if the number of homes that would have to be removed for the freeway would change based on the water-related design.

"That's how our constituents perceive the impact," Denis said.

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The number could change but not likely dramatically, Roehrich said.

Ahwatukee resident and citizens team member Laurel Arndt asked how the freeway design could affect water flows onto the Gila River Indian Community.

"We can start studying the impact of Pecos Road on their land," Roehrich said. "Drainage is going to be one of the major things."

The citizens team plans to meet next on April 17 and will discuss visual and biological resources and land use related to the proposed freeway.

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